



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY Health Department

PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY & SAFETY

Exhibit No. 2

Date 3-30-09

Bill No. HB 173

PI

March 30, 2009

Senator Roy Brown
Chairman, Senate Public Health and Safety
Montana Senate
PO Box 200500
Helena, MT 59620-0500

Dear Chairman Brown and Members of the Public Health and Safety Committee:

Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department strongly supports HB 173, a bill to provide support for counties to improve and protect the health of their communities. Although Montana's health departments vary in size and structure, we all agree that every citizen in every Montana County deserves public health protection.

When you think of public health, you might think about immunizations, restaurant inspections, flu shots, educational programs or health screenings. You might think about investigating and protecting our citizens from infectious diseases, such as measles, salmonella, or pertussis (whooping cough). Our public health departments in this state address these issues.

So how do we do this? In order to protect and promote the public's health our public health infrastructure must be strong. Infrastructure means a trained workforce and addressing national standards. HB 173 will provide funds to support local public health and tribal health departments in their work to prepare for accreditation.

HB 173 seeks to create a sustainable model of public health for all Montana to better meet the healthcare challenges of today and of the 21st Century. All Montanans deserve the same standards of excellence in public health practice regardless of county size or economy. I urge you to support this legislation.

Sincerely,

Melanie Reynolds, M.P.H.
Health Officer
Lewis and Clark County

"To Improve and Protect the Health of all Lewis and Clark County Residents."

montana public health association



P.O. Box 511 • Choteau MT, 59422

*"Envisioning healthy people in healthy communities
- throughout Montana"*



March 30, 2009

The Honorable Roy Brown, Chairman
Public Health, Welfare, and Safety Committee
Montana Senate
P.O. Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620-0400

RE: HB 173 Sustainable Public Health for All Montanans

Dear Chairman Brown and members of the Public Health, Welfare, and Safety Committee:

I am pleased to be here today to support House Bill 173 on behalf of the Montana Public Health Association (MPHA). MPHA is an organization with a diverse membership, which includes public health workers as well as partners from other professions; MPHA promotes public health practice and policies in Montana.

H.B. 173 is one of our association's top three priorities this session because MPHA believes in a public health system that saves money, gives Montanan's more bang for their buck and improves public health practice throughout Montana. Implementing a system of standards backed by accountability and quality is a win-win situation for all Montanans.

This bill is about local health departments, it's not about the Department of Public Health and Human Services. It's about Cascade County Health Dept, it's about Missoula City County Health Dept, and it's about Richland County Health Dept. It's about all the county health departments in Montana.

Nationally we are moving to an accreditation requirement for all health departments. All health departments will be required to meet the national standards that are already in place. This is a good move. It gives health departments a baseline to operate more efficiently and to look at specific county needs while meeting these standards.

HB 173 puts us ahead of the game. The proposed two year pilot project involves eight public health departments of various sizes. It will give these departments the knowledge and experience to meet the national standards and this knowledge and experience will then be shared with other health departments. Funding through HB 645, the stimulus bill, would be good use of one-time-only money as HB 173 is a pilot project.

I'd like to thank Representative Hendrick and Representative Villa for bringing this important legislation forward and I'd strongly encourage your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lora Wier".
Lora Wier

Fact Sheet

HB173 and Public Health in Montana

Sustainable Public Health For All Montanans

◇ January, 2009 ◇

What is HB173, and how does that provide sustainable public health for all Montana?

Hb173 will be introduced as a 2 year pilot program administered by the Department of Public Health and Human Services, involving 8 pilot counties of varying size (at least one tribal), to determine what Local Health Departments (LHD) need in order to perform essential public health functions (as defined by the National Association of County and City Health Officials [NACCHO], and national standards from the CDC and Public Health Accreditation Board [PHAB]). Montana has not legislatively adopted a standard for Local Health Departments that defines what a 'functional health department' looks like across the state.



Although the Montana Public Health Law Modernization Act of 2007 lays the foundation for standardizing Public Health (PH), it is time to create a model of consistent Public Health across the state. The bill is co-sponsored by Representative Dan Villa (D) – HD86 and Representative Gordon Hendrick (R)- HD14. The bill will help us move toward accreditation. There are ten essential functions that every PH department must address, but with little support, staff, and funds to do so. If PH can not be defined and the scope of practice delineated, it is neither sustainable, nor can it be strengthened financially. This bill seeks to adopt NACCHO's *Operation Definition of a Functional Health Department* and *Self Assessment Tool* as a means to strengthen LHD. At the completion of the 2 year pilot program an assessment will be done and recommendations made for statewide implementation.

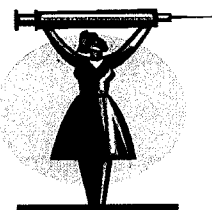
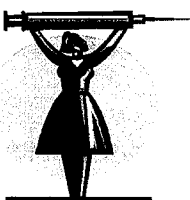
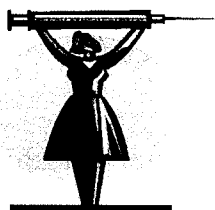
How does this affect Public Health Nursing?

Standardization of LHD is not intended to increase the workload of Public Health Nursing (PHN) rather, to help them to operate more efficiently, and to look at specific county needs while meeting the national standards. Public Health Nurses (PHNs) and LHD staff in Montana are vested in their communities and want the best services for the people who serve. The ten essential services of public health are the cornerstone of basic practice. Defining PH in Montana would set the bar for all counties to aspire to and give some guidelines to commissioners and local boards of health. This would also facilitate budgeting processes to more effectively target those guidelines. (continued on back)



With a definition of standards identified by law, they will have a baseline by which PH is measured and valued. This will enable local health departments to move towards accreditation, provide a measurement tool and strengthen and validate the public health workforce; above all, this will improve public health for all Montanans!

The most important thing is to support a sustainable model of public health for all Montanans; the end result is consistency in public health to assess, set policy, and assure improved health for Montana's families and communities.



Why should your Representative know about HB173?

Montana is a unique state where 84% of all counties are small or frontier with populations of 20,000 or less. 51 of Montana's 56 counties are designated Health Professional Shortage Areas and 53 of Montana's 56 counties hold designation as Medically Underserved Areas. In Addition 90% of these counties have poverty levels of 15% or greater. How does this relate to PH? There is a LHD in all but four of Montana's counties. In some counties this is the only medical professionals available in a 60+/- mile radius. With an economy and health care system that is fractured and segmented and long distances to medical centers, people living in these communities depend on their LHD for essential health services. Targeting prevention and maintenance health care is the best way to create a functional and sustainable health care system, beginning with PHN and LHD that are already established and



Public Health

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vested in the community. PH is poised to address the health care disparities in Montana and is charged with improving access to health care for all Montanans. PH services are cost effective and efficient. PHNs practice prevention and know the community and the community members trust and have confidence in them. What better why to provide health care than through strengthened LHD? Why not invest in what is already established instead of reinventing the wheel. By shoring up the foundation of PH through standardizations across the State of Montana, a more functional, sustainable public health practice can be realized that benefits the well-being of all Montanans.

